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July 2011

# ARMY AND MARINE CORPS TRAINING

## Metrics Needed to Assess Initiatives on Training Management Skills

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## ARMY AND MARINE CORPS TRAINING

### Metrics Needed to Assess Initiatives on Training Management Skills

#### Why GAO Did This Study

Over the past decade, Army and Marine Corps forces have deployed repeatedly with limited time between deployments. At their home stations, combat training centers, and other locations, units have focused their limited training time on training for counterinsurgency operations. Prior to deploying, units also conduct a large-scale exercise referred to as a culminating training event. With the drawdown of forces in Iraq, the services have begun to resume training for a fuller range of offensive, defensive, and stability missions. The House report to the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2011 directed GAO to report on the Army's and Marine Corps' abilities to complete training requirements. GAO assessed the extent to which the services' (1) active component forces are completing training prior to the culminating training event and (2) leaders are positioned to plan and manage training as forces resume training for a fuller range of missions. GAO analyzed training requirements and unit training documentation, and interviewed headquarters and unit personnel during site visits between July 2010 and July 2011.

#### What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that the services develop results-oriented performance metrics that can be used to evaluate the effectiveness of their training management initiatives and support any adjustments that the services may need to make to these initiatives. DOD concurred with this recommendation.

#### What GAO Found

Deploying Army and Marine Corps units conduct extensive predeployment training—both individual and collective, to include a large-scale culminating training event—at their home stations, combat training centers, and other locations. However, several factors, such as limited training time between deployments, the large number of training requirements, and the current focus on counterinsurgency operation training have been preventing units from completing all desired training prior to the culminating training event. For example, based on GAO's site visits, 7 of 13 units were not able to complete all of the desired individual and collective training (e.g., company-level live fire training) prior to arriving at the combat training centers. Further, officials from all of the units GAO spoke with stated that they planned to delay certain training until they were at the combat training centers since resources—such as theater-specific equipment like mine resistant ambush protected vehicles—were more readily available there. GAO found that some units had to train to improve proficiency levels at the combat training centers prior to beginning the culminating training events, and therefore were not always able to take full advantage of the training opportunities available to them at the combat training centers to conduct complex, higher-level training. Still, according to trainers at the combat training centers, while units arrive with varying levels of proficiency, all forces leave with at least the platoon level proficiency required to execute the counterinsurgency missions required for ongoing operations in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Over the past decade, continuous overseas deployments have reduced training timeframes and resulted in senior leaders assuming training management responsibilities from junior leaders. Specifically, leaders at higher headquarters have taken responsibility for much of the training management function—planning, preparing, and assessing training—while junior leaders have focused primarily on training execution. However, changing conditions, such as increased competition for resources in a constrained fiscal environment, increased time at home station, and a return to training for a fuller range of missions, make it imperative that all leaders possess a strong foundation in training management. The services are developing various initiatives to restore and develop training management skills in their leaders, but neither service has developed results-oriented performance metrics to gauge the effectiveness of their efforts to restore these skills. As GAO has previously reported, establishing metrics can help federal agencies target training investments and assess the contributions that training programs make to improving results. Without a means of measuring the effectiveness of their efforts, the Army and Marine Corps will not have the information they need to assess the extent to which their leaders have the training management skills needed to plan, prepare, and assess required training.

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## **Abbreviations**

ARFORGEN   Army Force Generation

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United States Government Accountability Office  
Washington, DC 20548

July 28, 2011

The Honorable Carl Levin  
Chairman  
The Honorable John McCain  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Armed Services  
United States Senate

The Honorable Howard McKeon  
Chairman  
The Honorable Adam Smith  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Armed Services  
House of Representatives

The United States is nearly a decade into an era of persistent conflict, one in which Army and Marine Corps forces have experienced continual operational deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan with limited time to prepare between deployments. In preparation for these deployments, Army and Marine Corps combat arms<sup>1</sup> and combat support<sup>2</sup> forces train to meet numerous requirements, with particular focus on counterinsurgency operations. These training requirements are designed to follow a progressive building block approach—moving from individual to small unit training, both of which are typically conducted at a unit's home station, to larger unit collective training,<sup>3</sup> which are sometimes conducted at a unit's home station but may be conducted at other locations. Finally, prior to deployment, Army brigade combat teams and

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<sup>1</sup>Combat arms forces provide direct combat power to meet operational requirements, performing their core missions within service deployment constructs, such as Army brigade combat teams or Marine Corps regiments.

<sup>2</sup>Army support forces consist of: combat support units that provide fire support and operational assistance to combat elements, including military police, combat engineers, and military intelligence soldiers; and combat service support units that provide essential capabilities, functions, activities, and tasks necessary to sustain operating forces, including soldiers who provide transportation, medical, and quartermaster support. Marine Corps support elements, known as Logistics Combat Elements, perform—among others—medical, supply, engineering, and transportation tasks.

<sup>3</sup>Collective training refers to training conducted at the unit level.

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all Marine Corps battalions deploying to Afghanistan conduct a large-scale exercise referred to as a culminating training event at a service combat training center.<sup>4</sup> The culminating training event is intended to challenge units and their leaders in an environment that involves scenarios that replicate current operational conditions in the theater to which they will be deploying.

The drawdown of forces in Iraq has begun to increase the amount of time that units will spend at home station. While units may have more time to train, this time will be used to train for additional missions. Specifically, in the past few years, the Army and Marine Corps have issued guidance directing forces to expand the training focus from counterinsurgency operations to a fuller range of offensive, defensive, and stability missions. For example, in October 2010, U.S. Army Forces Command issued guidance directing units to renew training emphasis on, among other things, integration of aviation assets.<sup>5</sup> Further, as the Army and Marine Corps return to training for a fuller range of missions, the services have begun to place renewed focus on restoring and developing leaders' training management skills. These skills involve planning and preparing for unit training, actually executing the training, and, finally, assessing the execution of training.

The House Armed Services Committee report<sup>6</sup> accompanying the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2011 directed GAO to report on a number of military readiness issues, to include the Army's and Marine Corps' abilities to complete training requirements, including at home station. In June 2011, we reported on the Army's and Marine Corps' readiness reporting changes,<sup>7</sup> and will report separately on other issues called for in the House report. For this report, we assessed the extent to which (1) active component Army and Marine Corps combat arms and combat support forces are completing training prior to the culminating training event and (2) Army and Marine Corps leaders are

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<sup>4</sup>Army combat support units and smaller units, as well as Marine Corps units not deploying to Afghanistan, conduct their culminating training event at home station or other locations.

<sup>5</sup>U.S. Army Forces Command Training and Leader Development Guidance for Fiscal Year 2011-2012 (Oct. 2010).

<sup>6</sup>H.R. Rep. No. 111-491, at 257-58 (2010).

<sup>7</sup>GAO, *Military Readiness: Changes in Reporting Provide Additional Data but Actions Needed to Improve Consistency*, [GAO-11-526](#) (Washington, D.C.: June 3, 2011).

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positioned to plan and manage training as forces resume training for a fuller range of missions.

To determine the extent to which active component Army and Marine Corps combat arms and combat support forces are completing training prior to the culminating training event, we reviewed Office of the Secretary of Defense, Joint Staff, combatant command, Army, and Marine Corps training guidance, to determine the nature of training requirements, and interviewed officials from these offices to discuss these documents. In addition, we reviewed service guidance to identify the extent to which specific training had to be completed prior to the culminating training events and interviewed service officials to discuss this guidance. We also interviewed service training officials to discuss any differences between training requirements for combat arms and combat support forces. We selected eight Army and Marine Corps locations for site visits based on deployment and training dates to allow a review of multiple units trained at the location. For the Army, we used readiness information from the Defense Readiness Reporting System-Army to identify the universe of units for site selection purposes, and we selected the installations with the largest number of combat arms and combat support brigades present during our site visit time frames. We found this data to be sufficiently reliable for the purpose of site selection. For the Marine Corps, we focused on battalion-sized combat arms and combat support units; these units conduct their culminating training events at the service's combat training center at Twentynine Palms, California. Findings from the site visits with the Army and Marine Corps are not generalizable to all units. Specifically, we reviewed unit training documents and interviewed officials from 19 Army and 10 Marine Corps units to discuss training information such as: (1) the training that units were completing, (2) any training that units were unable to complete prior to the culminating training event, (3) any factors that impacted units' abilities to complete training prior to the culminating training event, and (4) the impact that not completing training prior to the final culminating training event might have on those events.

To assess the extent to which leaders are positioned to plan and manage training as the forces resume training for a fuller range of missions, we reviewed service policy and guidance that provided information on the return to training for a fuller range of missions, such as the U.S. Army Forces Command Training and Leader Development Guidance for Fiscal Year 2011-2012 and the Marine Corps Posture Statement for 2011. We interviewed service and unit officials to discuss these documents and changing conditions, such as the drawdown of forces from Iraq, and the



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impact of these conditions on training for a fuller range of missions. We also examined service plans to restore and develop training management skills for all Army and Marine Corps leaders, including junior leaders, and discussed these plans with service officials. Appendix I provides a more detailed description of our scope and methodology.

We conducted this performance audit from July 2010 to July 2011, in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

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## Background

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### The Nature of Army and Marine Corps Forces' Training Requirements

All Army and Marine Corps forces are required to annually complete individual training requirements, such as weapons qualification; sexual assault prevention and response; and chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear defense training. Congress, the Department of Defense, and the Army and Marine Corps all have the authority to establish training requirements. Service policies do not specify where annual training should be completed, and commanders can prioritize this training to align it with other training the units are conducting to develop units' combat capabilities. As a result of this flexibility, units conduct annual training throughout the year at home stations and even while deployed.

In addition to annual training, forces that deploy conduct both individual and collective predeployment training. Army and Marine Corps predeployment training, which can be conducted at home station or other locations, begins with individual and small unit training and progresses to larger scale collective training exercises that are designed to build proficiency in the skills required for deployment and the culminating training event.<sup>8</sup> The requirements for this training come from a variety of

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<sup>8</sup>Army combat support brigades, which typically do not deploy as an entire brigade, will generally conduct a culminating training event at an alternate location, such as home station, unless they are included in a brigade combat team's culminating training event at a combat training center.

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sources. The Commander of U.S. Central Command has established baseline individual and collective training requirements for units deploying to Iraq and Afghanistan. Required individual training requirements include, but are not limited to, basic marksmanship, high-mobility multipurpose wheeled vehicle and mine resistant ambush protected vehicle egress assistance training, and first aid. Each service secretary is responsible for training their forces to execute the current and future operational requirements of the combatant commands.<sup>9</sup> Accordingly, U.S. Army Forces Command, as the Army's force provider, and the Commandant of the Marine Corps have also issued training requirements for forces deploying in support of missions in Iraq and Afghanistan.<sup>10</sup> Other Army and Marine Corps commands at various levels have also imposed predeployment training requirements and increased the required number of repetitions for certain training tasks. Unit training requirements may differ based on various factors, such as unit type—for example, combat arms and combat support forces—the units' mission, or deployment location.

Training requirements may have several associated tasks. For example, depending on the mission, Army soldiers and units are required to conduct counter-improvised explosive device training, which may consist of up to 8 individual and 11 collective tasks, including reacting to, and preparing for, a possible counter-improvised explosive device attack. Likewise, Marines are required to conduct language and culture training, which depending on the mission, may include 2 to 5 individual and 4 collective training tasks.

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## Training within the Army and Marine Corps Force Generation Processes

The Army's Force Generation model (ARFORGEN) is a cyclical model designed to build the readiness of units as they move through three phases termed RESET, Train/Ready, and Available. The Army uses these phases to synchronize training with the arrival of unit personnel and equipment. The initial phase of ARFORGEN is RESET, which begins when a unit returns from deployment or exits the Available phase. Units in

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<sup>9</sup>See sections 3013, 5013, and 8013 of Title 10, U.S. Code (2011) for the responsibilities of the service secretaries.

<sup>10</sup>U.S. Army Forces Command Pre-deployment Training Guidance in Support of Combatant Commands (Dec. 2010) and Marine Corps Order, 3502.6, Marine Corps Force Generation Process (Apr. 29, 2010).

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RESET perform limited individual, team, and/or crew training tasks. As units exit RESET, they enter the Train/Ready phase, where they build readiness through further individual and collective training tasks. As units exit Train/Ready, they enter the Available phase, when they may be deployed.<sup>11</sup> During this phase, units focus on sustainment training.

Together, figures 1 and 2 show how training opportunities are expected to change as deployment-to-dwell ratios—the amount of time spent deployed compared to the amount not deployed—change. As forces draw down in Iraq, the length of the Train/Ready phase is expected to increase. In addition, the types of training conducted during this phase will change. The figures are not meant to show the exact amount of time devoted to training—for assigned missions, such as the current counterinsurgency missions, or for a fuller range of missions—but they do illustrate the current and expected future trends.<sup>12</sup>

Figure 1 shows how training has generally occurred within the ARFORGEN process in recent years, when much of the active Army was experiencing 1:1 deployment-to-dwell ratios.

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<sup>11</sup>Two categories of forces exist within ARFORGEN: the Deployed Expeditionary Force and the Contingency Expeditionary Force. Upon entering the Available phase, Deployed Expeditionary Forces deploy to execute their assigned operational missions. Contingency Expeditionary Forces do not immediately deploy but are prepared to execute a contingency mission, operational plan, or other Army requirement if called upon.

<sup>12</sup>Sometimes assigned mission training tasks overlap with training for a fuller range of missions. This makes it difficult, if not impossible, to accurately calculate the amount of time spent on each type of training.

**Figure 1: Training for Army Active Component Deployed Expeditionary Forces under ARFORGEN 1:1 Deployment to Dwell Ratio**



Source: GAO analysis of Army policy and guidance.

Figure 2 shows how training is expected to change as requirements for ongoing operations in Iraq decline.

**Figure 2: Expected Changes in Training for Army Active Component Deployed Expeditionary Forces under ARFORGEN 1:2 Deployment to Dwell Ratio**



Source: GAO analysis of Army policy and guidance.

Marine Corps Force Generation is a four-block process designed to synchronize manning, equipping, and training to build a total force capable of responding to combatant commander requirements. As shown in table 1, Marine Corps predeployment training is planned and executed in accordance with a standardized system of “building blocks,” which progresses from individual to collective training. Training in block one is individual training and is divided into baseline requirements (Block 1A) and theater-specific training requirements (Block 1B).

**Table 1: Marine Corps Block Training**

Block	Category	Description
Block 1 (A/B)	Individual training	Focus on baseline requirements, annual training requirements, and theater-specific core skills training.
Block 2	Collective Training	Core capabilities and theater-specific training conducted at small unit level (at company level and below).
Block 3	Advanced Collective Training	Expansion of core capabilities training conducted by the unit and by the unit's higher headquarters.
Block 4	Culminating Training Event	The graduation predeployment training exercise. Individually tailored to support and assess a unit's ability to perform tasks on its assigned mission essential task list.

Source: Marine Corps Order 3502.6.

Training at the Army and Marine Corps Combat Training Centers

At the Army's and Marine Corps' combat training centers, units are able to execute large-scale, highly realistic and stressful advanced training, including live-fire training, which they may not be able to conduct at their home stations. Each training rotation affords units and their leaders the opportunity to face a well-trained opposing force, focus training on higher unit-level tasks, develop proficiency under increasingly difficult conditions, and receive in-depth analyses of performance from training experts. In addition, training at the combat training centers is tailored to bring units to the proficiency level needed to execute their missions.

The Army maintains two combat training centers in the continental United States: the National Training Center, Fort Irwin, California and the Joint

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Readiness Training Center, Fort Polk, Louisiana.<sup>13</sup> These centers focus on training brigade combat teams—approximately 5,000 servicemembers—during rotations that last between 18 and 25 days. The Marine Corps has a single combat training center, the Air Ground Combat Center at Twentynine Palms, California. At this combat training center, multiple battalion-sized units preparing to deploy to Afghanistan participate in a 28-day exercise. Each exercise includes two infantry battalions, a combat logistics battalion, and an aviation combat element. These exercises prepare marines for the tactics and procedures they are expected to employ in Afghanistan.

Units are not required to complete a specific level of training prior to the culminating training events that are held at the combat training centers. However, service policies identify training goals for units to complete. For example, in October 2010, Forces Command established a goal for active component units to achieve company-level proficiency at home station.<sup>14</sup> In addition, in 2010, U.S. Army Forces Command identified a goal for training to be completed at the combat training centers—brigade-level, live-fire exercises.<sup>15</sup> Similarly, an April 2010 Marine Corps policy stated that units should conduct battalion level training prior to conducting a culminating training event.<sup>16</sup> The Army and Marine Corps are developing and implementing systems to assist units in tracking training proficiency and completion throughout the service force generation cycles.

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<sup>13</sup>The Army maintains two other combat training centers, the Battle Command Training Center and the Joint Multinational Readiness Center. We did not include these combat training centers in our review.

<sup>14</sup>U.S. Army Forces Command Training and Leader Development Guidance for Fiscal Year 2011-2012 (Oct. 2010).

<sup>15</sup>U.S. Army Forces Command Regulation 350-50-1, *Training at the National Training Center* (Jan. 20, 2010) and U.S. Army Forces Command Regulation 350-50-2, *Training at the Joint Readiness Training Center* (Apr. 28, 2010).

<sup>16</sup>Marine Corps Order, 3502.6, Marine Corps Force Generation Process (Apr. 29, 2010).

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## Several Factors Impact Unit Abilities to Complete Desired Training Prior to the Culminating Training Events

While deployable combat arms and combat support forces in the Army and Marine Corps conduct extensive predeployment training, they are not always able to complete all desired training prior to the culminating training event. Based on our unit visits, 7 of 13 Army and Marine Corps units conducting a culminating training event at a combat training center were not able to complete all of the desired individual and collective training (e.g., company-level, live-fire training) prior to their arrival at the combat training centers.<sup>17</sup> During our discussions with unit and training command officials, we found that units do not always reach the desired level of proficiency prior to their culminating training events due to several factors—such as the current focus on training on counterinsurgency skills that are needed in Iraq and Afghanistan, the large number of requirements, limited training time between deployments, and availability of necessary equipment.

Unit officials from both services identified training that they were unable to complete prior to arriving at the combat training centers. The following are examples of the types of desired training that some Army and Marine Corps units that we visited were not able to complete prior to arriving at the combat training centers.

- Due to the extensive licensing and certification requirements for the different types of vehicles, which are currently being used in Iraq and Afghanistan, units were not always able to license and certify all necessary drivers prior to arriving at the combat training centers.
- Aviation units, which balance aviation requirements and ground requirements, were not always able to complete all ground training requirements, such as all language and culture training.
- Marine Corps units often waived the first two levels of weapons qualifications.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup>While we spoke with 29 units, 9 units were Army support units that would not conduct a culminating training event at a combat training center. Additionally, this number does not include 5 of the Army combat units we spoke with that were recently returning from deployment, and two of the Marine Corps battalions that we spoke with that would not conduct a culminating training event at Twentynine Palms.

<sup>18</sup>The first two levels of Marine Corps weapon qualifications involve basic skills, such as weapons familiarization. When marines complete levels three and four, they will have demonstrated their ability to complete levels one and two.

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- Given limited theater-specific equipment at home station, units were not always able to complete convoy training using mine resistant ambush protected vehicles.
  - Biometrics training and training on communications equipment were often not completed prior to arriving at the combat training centers.
  - Given limited systems at home station, units were often unable to integrate unmanned aerial systems into training prior to arriving at the combat training centers.
  - Due to land constraints, units were often unable to complete company-level, live-fire attack prior to arriving at the combat training centers.

Further, officials from all of the Army and Marine Corps units we spoke with stated that they planned to delay certain training until they were at the combat training centers since resources—such as theater-specific equipment like mine resistant ambush protected vehicles—were more readily available there. In addition, due to land constraints in the Pacific, Hawaii units are unable to conduct heavy artillery training prior to arriving at the combat training centers.

Furthermore, we found that some units had to train to improve proficiency levels at the combat training centers prior to beginning the culminating training events, and therefore were not always able to take full advantage of the training opportunities available to them at the combat training centers to conduct complex, higher-level training. In the past, units used the initial week at the combat training centers to replicate their arrival in theater and prepare to commence combat operations by conducting tasks such as receiving and organizing equipment; however, over the past decade, units have had to incorporate other types of training into this first week. For example, training officials at the National Training Center stated that it was necessary for soldiers that were new to the units to complete individual weapons qualifications during the first 5 days of the combat training center rotation because these soldiers often arrived after their unit's home station ranges were completed, failed to qualify on their weapon, or were not available on the day their unit was at the range. Army and Marine Corps officials, including trainers at the combat training centers, reported that while units arrive at the combat training centers with varying levels of proficiency, all units leave with at least the platoon level proficiency required to execute counterinsurgency missions for the current operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. In addition, Army and Marine Corps guidance places responsibility on unit commanders to certify that their units have completed all required training and are prepared to deploy. Once certified, the Commanding General of Army Forces



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Command and the Marine Expeditionary Forces Commanding Generals validate completion of training for all Army and Marine Corps units, respectively, prior to deploying.

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## Army and Marine Corps Have Initiatives to Restore and Develop Leaders' Training Management Skills, but Lack Results-Oriented Performance Measures to Evaluate Their Impact

While leaders are responsible for the training of their units, the pace of operations over the past decade has led to reduced training time frames, and as a result, the services have shifted training management responsibilities from junior leaders to their higher headquarters. However, changing conditions—such as the increased competition for training resources in an increasingly constrained fiscal environment and the return to training for a broader range of missions—highlight the importance of solid training management skills for all leaders. While the Army and Marine Corps are developing initiatives to restore and develop the capabilities of leaders to plan, prepare, execute, and assess training, neither service has established results-oriented performance measures to evaluate the impact of these initiatives.

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## Pace of Current Operations Has Resulted in Fewer Opportunities to Focus on Training Management

Effective training, which can be best accomplished when founded on solid training management, is critical to overall mission readiness, but the pace of current operations has resulted in fewer opportunities for junior leaders to focus on training management. As noted in Army policy,<sup>19</sup> leaders manage training to ensure effective unit preparation and successful mission execution. Similarly, Marine Corps guidance notes that training management allows for maximized results when executing training.<sup>20</sup> To train effectively, leaders at all levels must possess a thorough understanding of training management—the process of planning, preparing, executing, and assessing training—and continually practice these skills. Training management skills are especially important for junior leaders, as it is these leaders that focus the priorities of their units—squad, platoons, and companies—to achieve training goals, maximize training, and reach the greatest level of readiness and proficiency prior to

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<sup>19</sup>Army Field Manual 7-0, *Training Units and Developing Leaders for Full Spectrum Operations* (Feb. 2011).

<sup>20</sup>Marine Corps MCRP 3-0A, *Unit Training Management Guide* (Nov. 1996).

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and during the culminating training event.<sup>21</sup> Traditionally, leaders have gained these skills through training and education in formal schools, the learning and experience gained while assigned to operational and training organizations, and individuals' own self-development.

Continuous deployments to evolving theaters have, over the past decade, led to shorter timeframes during which units can accomplish training. Given these shorter time frames, much of the responsibility for training management has been assumed by senior leaders, leaving some junior leaders with limited opportunities to perform or observe training management. As a result, junior leaders have focused more on training execution and their higher headquarters have assumed much of the responsibility for planning and preparing unit training.

According to Army and Marine Corps unit officials, while junior leaders are capable of executing live-fire training and combat scenarios,<sup>22</sup> many of these leaders have not had experience in preparing the ranges for such training exercises. Further, the U.S. Army Forces Command Training and Leader Development Guidance for Fiscal Year 2011-2012 states that training meetings have not always been conducted to standard over the last nine years. These training meetings—which are essential to training management—are conducted by unit leaders and are meant to provide feedback on the completion of training requirements, task proficiency, and the quality of the training conducted.

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### Training Management Will Become More Complex with the Changing Conditions

With the decline in operational requirements in Iraq, more units are at home for longer periods, resulting in increased competition for training resources—such as training ranges, centrally managed equipment, and simulators. At the same time, these units are facing an increasingly constrained fiscal environment in which the services are seeking to achieve greater efficiencies in training, and potential savings. In this environment, junior leaders will be expected to learn the fundamentals of planning and conducting individual and small unit collective training

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<sup>21</sup> Junior leaders for both the Army and Marine Corps include the lieutenants and captains who command squads, platoons, and companies, along with their unit noncommissioned officers.

<sup>22</sup> According to Army and Marine Corps officials, the effectiveness of training execution is tracked through mission essential tasks and training assessments in their readiness reporting systems.

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including obtaining resources, identifying critical requirements, and integrating individual and collective training events.

During our visit, officials at Joint Base Lewis-McChord noted that 2010-2011 was the first time since the start of operations in Iraq in 2003 that the installation's nine brigades were on base at the same time.<sup>23</sup> With the large number of units at the base, installation officials, in coordination with corps and brigade training officers, identified strict time frames during which individual units would have priority over training resources and assisted junior leaders in planning for the use of training ranges and other resources. Likewise, Marine Corps officials noted that their units in the Pacific, which rely on Army installations across Hawaii to conduct a significant portion of their live-fire training and large-scale collective training exercises, would experience increased competition for the use of training ranges as time at home station begins to increase.

The ability of junior leaders to effectively manage expanded training requirements will be a key to meeting the Army's recently established goal for active component units to achieve company-level proficiency at home station prior to the culminating training event.<sup>24</sup> Further, the services are seeking to address the atrophy of some critical skills by shifting their training focus from counterinsurgency operations to a fuller range of missions. For example, while some Marine Corps units have retained the capability to conduct amphibious operations, this critical skill has not been exercised by all units since the start of operations in Iraq. However, as the Marine Corps returns to training for its full range of missions, junior leaders will be expected to plan and manage additional individual and collective training requirements to prepare units to execute this mission. Training management will also become more complex as the services return to conducting more joint, combined, and multinational exercises. For example, units are supposed to prepare for exercises with partner nations, but some units have recently been unable to train for or

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<sup>23</sup>In May 2011, GAO reported that over the next year, Fort Drum, New York and Fort Riley, Kansas will face similar population increases as more units return from deployments. GAO, *Military Housing: Enhancements Needed to Housing Allowance Process and Information Sharing among Services*, [GAO-11-462](#) (Washington, D.C.: May 16, 2011).

<sup>24</sup>U.S. Army Forces Command Training and Leader Development Guidance for Fiscal Year 2011-2012 (Oct. 2010).

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participate in such exercises.<sup>25</sup> With an increase in dwell time, and fewer units deploying to Iraq, more time will be available for units to focus on training and preparing for these exercises.

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### The Services Have Developed Various Initiatives to Restore and Develop Training Management Skills

The Army and Marine Corps recognize the need to renew emphasis on the training management skills that enable leaders to plan and resource training, optimize installation resources, track individual qualifications and proficiencies, and assess training readiness. As a result, the services have been proactive in developing initiatives that are designed to restore training management skills in some leaders, and develop these skills in junior leaders.

Specifically, the Army and Marine Corps have developed online resources and demonstration videos to refresh leaders' training management skills and serve as instructional tools until leaders can attend formal instruction on these skills. For example, the Army has developed online videos that show leaders how to conduct training meetings. Likewise, Marine Corps officials stated that they are currently revising one of their online training management courses and plan to release an 8-hour computer-based course designed to assist leaders in developing training management skills.

Further, the services are developing and implementing automated training management systems. According to Army guidance,<sup>26</sup> the Army's Digital Training Management System, an automated system for tracking and managing both individual and collective training, is the key to establishing training management amongst its leaders. The system allows unit leaders—including junior leaders—to develop their mission-essential task list, establish calendars for their training plans, and track the completion of training requirements and exercises. Similarly, according to officials, the Marine Corps' Training Information Management System, once fully implemented, will allow leaders to track and manage individual marine and collective unit capabilities and assist leaders in developing training

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<sup>25</sup>Combatant commands conduct training exercises with partner nations and the units owned by those commands are supposed to train for and participate in these exercises. Due to the continual deployments of Pacific Command units to Iraq and Afghanistan, many units that would typically participate in Pacific exercises have been unavailable to do so.

<sup>26</sup>U.S. Army Forces Command Campaign Plan 2011-2015 (Oct. 2010).

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plans and calendars. According to Army and Marine Corps officials, in the future, the automated training management systems will interface with their readiness reporting systems and allow leaders to have a more objective view of unit training readiness.

In addition to the online training and automated systems, both services are revamping their professional military education courses to emphasize training management skills. Specifically, the Army is currently working to standardize and update the training management content within its leadership courses, starting with the Captains' Career Course. Officials stated that they expect to test the revised course content by September 2011 and are also looking to identify and standardize the training management content taught in other career courses, such as those designed for non-commissioned officers. In January 2009, the Marine Corps began conducting the Unit Readiness Planning Course, a comprehensive, 5-day training management course that is available to leaders in the ranks of corporal to colonel. The service has also added a training management component to many of its professional military education courses for junior leaders, such as the Commander's Symposium and the Expeditionary Warfare School.<sup>27</sup>

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### Army and Marine Corps Lack Results-Oriented Performance Metrics to Fully Evaluate the Impact of Their Training Management Initiatives

The Army's and Marine Corps' initiatives are a solid start to the development of training management skills in their junior leaders, but neither service has developed results-oriented performance metrics to gauge the effectiveness of their efforts to restore training management skills. Our prior work has shown that it is important for agencies to incorporate performance metrics to demonstrate the contributions that training programs make to improve results.<sup>28</sup> Incorporating valid measures of effectiveness into training and development programs enables an agency to better ensure that desired changes will occur in trainee's skills, knowledge, and abilities. When developing results-oriented performance metrics, organizations should consider the frequency of evaluation, and the indicators that will be used to evaluate the performance of initiatives.

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<sup>27</sup>The Expeditionary Warfare School is a 9-month, career-level course for Marine captains designed to enable them to command and/or serve as primary staff officers in their military occupation.

<sup>28</sup>GAO, *Human Capital: A Guide for Assessing Strategic Training and Development Efforts in the Federal Government*, [GAO-04-546G](#) (Washington, D.C.: Mar. 2004).

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For example, the services could measure the ability of junior leaders to plan, prepare, and assess training that will be expected of them, or the amount and types of on-the-job training required for junior leaders to perform required training tasks after those leaders have attended identified courses or participated in on-the-job training. By establishing metrics, the services can identify approaches that may not be working and adjust training as needed. In addition, given the variety of ways to provide training, such as classroom, e-learning, and on-the-job training, results-oriented performance metrics can help target training investments and provide the services with credible information on how their initiatives are impacting performance.<sup>29</sup>

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## Conclusions

Training can prepare Army and Marine Corps forces to execute a wide range of missions. However, the pace of operations over the past decade has limited training time and reduced the services' abilities to focus on developing training management skills in their junior leaders. At the same time, the Army and Marine Corps have focused their limited training time on training personnel in the skills needed to carry out their counterinsurgency missions in Iraq and Afghanistan. With the drawdown of forces in Iraq and a commitment to resume training for a fuller range of missions, both services have recognized the need and opportunity to restore and develop leaders' abilities to plan, prepare, execute, and assess the wider range of needed training. While the Army and Marine Corps have initiatives to restore and develop leaders' training management skills, neither service has developed results-oriented performance metrics that would allow them to determine the effectiveness of their initiatives and adjust when necessary. Ensuring that these training management skills are restored and developed is an essential step in maximizing training effectiveness, especially as forces spend more time at home station and face increased competition for installation training resources. However, without a means of measuring the effectiveness of their efforts to restore and develop leaders' training management skills, the Army and Marine Corps lack the information they need to assess the extent to which their leaders are prepared to plan, prepare, and assess required training.

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<sup>29</sup>GAO-04-546G.

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## Recommendation for Executive Action

As the Army and Marine Corps continue to develop and implement programs to restore and develop leaders' training management skills, we recommend that the Secretary of Defense direct the Secretary of the Army and the Commandant of the Marine Corps to develop results-oriented performance metrics that can be used to evaluate the effectiveness of these training management initiatives and support any adjustments that may be needed.

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## Agency Comments and Our Evaluation

In written comments on a draft of this report, DOD concurred with our recommendation that the Secretary of Defense direct the Secretary of the Army and the Commandant of the Marine Corps to develop results-oriented performance metrics that can be used to evaluate the effectiveness of training management initiatives and support any adjustments that may be needed. DOD noted that for the Army, results-oriented performance metrics could help provide an objective view to support the subjective assessment of training readiness. DOD further stated that as the Marine Corps redeploys and resets the force, the service will ensure doctrinal unit training management practices are emphasized as a means to most effectively plan and meet training readiness requirements. In addition, the Marine Corps will continue to develop and refine performance metrics and tools that support the commander's ability to assess individual and unit training readiness. The full text of DOD's written comments is reprinted in appendix II.

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We are also sending copies of this report to the Secretary of Defense, the Secretary of the Army, the Commandant of the Marine Corps, and appropriate congressional committees. In addition, this report will be available at no charge on the GAO Web site at <http://www.gao.gov>.

Should you or your staff have any questions concerning this report, please contact me at (202) 512-9619 or [pickups@gao.gov](mailto:pickups@gao.gov). Contact points for our Offices of Congressional Relations and Public Affairs may be found on the last page of this report. Key contributors to this report are listed in appendix III.



Sharon L. Pickup, Director  
Defense Capabilities and Management

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# Appendix I: Scope and Methodology

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To determine the extent to which Army and Marine Corps combat arms and combat support forces are completing training prior to the culminating training event, we first reviewed Office of the Secretary of Defense, Joint Staff, combatant command, Army, and Marine Corps training requirements and guidance, including U.S. Central Command Theater Entry Requirements, U.S. Pacific Command Fiscal Year 11-14 Pacific Joint Training Strategy, U.S. Army Forces Command Pre-deployment Training Guidance in Support of Combatant Commands, Army Regulation 350-1, *Army Training and Leader Development*, and Marine Corps Order 3502.6, *Marine Corps Force Generation Process*, to determine the nature of training requirements. We also interviewed officials from these offices to discuss these documents. In addition, we interviewed trainers from the Army's two maneuver combat training centers in the continental United States at Fort Irwin, California and Fort Polk, Louisiana, and the Marine Corps single combat training center at Twentynine Palms, California, to discuss the desired training, if any, that units could not complete prior to the culminating training event. We also reviewed service training guidance such as U.S. Army Forces Command Regulation 350-50-1, *Training at the National Training Center*, and U.S. Army Forces Command Regulation 350-50-2, *Training at the Joint Readiness Training Center*, to identify the extent to which the guidance established requirements for training to be completed prior to the culminating training events and interviewed trainers from the combat training centers to discuss this guidance.

Further, we reviewed unit training documents and interviewed officials from 19 Army and 10 Marine Corps units to discuss training information such as: (1) the training that units were completing, (2) any training that units were unable to complete prior to the culminating training events, (3) any factors that impacted units' abilities to complete training prior to the culminating training events, and (4) the impact that not completing training prior to the final culminating training event might have on those events. For the Army, we used readiness information from the Defense Readiness Reporting System-Army from November 2010, to identify the universe of all deployable brigade-sized units, since these units may conduct their culminating training event at a combat training center. We then selected the installations with the largest number of combat arms and combat support brigades present during our site visit timeframes. We found this data to be sufficiently reliable for the purpose of site selection. Based on the data, we selected Fort Bragg, North Carolina; Fort Hood, Texas; Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Washington; and Schofield Barracks, Hawaii, where we held discussions with 10 Army brigade combat teams and 9 Army support brigades. For the Marine Corps, we focused on



battalion-sized combat arms and combat support units; these units conduct their culminating training events at the service's combat training center at Twentynine Palms, California. Specifically, we identified those units who would be conducting their culminating training events at the combat training center between November 2010 and February 2011. We held discussions with 5 Marine Corps ground combat units, and 5 Marine Corps support units from Camp Lejeune, North Carolina; Camp Pendleton, California; Twentynine Palms, California; and Marine Corps Base Hawaii. Findings from the Army and Marine Corps site visits are not generalizable to all units. We also spoke with Army and Marine Corps officials from Fort Shafter, Hawaii, and Okinawa, Japan, respectively, to discuss any factors that impacted units' abilities to complete training prior to the culminating training events.

To assess the extent to which leaders are positioned to plan and manage training as forces resume training for a fuller range of missions, we reviewed service policy and guidance that provided information on the return to training for a fuller range of missions, such as the U.S. Army Forces Command Training and Leader Development Guidance for Fiscal Year 2011-2012, Army Field Manual 7-0, *Training Units and Developing Leaders for Full Spectrum Operations*, the Marine Corps' Commandant Planning Guidance, and the Marine Corps Posture Statement for 2011. We interviewed service and unit officials to discuss these documents and how training for a fuller range of missions might be impacted by changing conditions, such as the drawdown of forces from Iraq. We interviewed installation management officials from both Army and Marine Corps installations to discuss challenges that may exist for units as more units are stationed at home for longer periods of time, and reviewed installation policies and plans regarding the scheduling of home station resources, such as ranges, centrally managed equipment, and simulators. We also examined service plans and strategies to develop and restore training management skills amongst Army and Marine Corps leaders, and discussed these plans with service officials. For example, we reviewed the U.S. Army Forces Command Inspector General's Office Training Management Assessment, Army Field Manual 7-0, Marine Corps MCRP 3-0A, *Unit Training Management Guide*, the Marine Corps Posture Statement and the Marine Corps Task 9 Vision and Strategy 2025. We also discussed current and future initiatives to restore and develop training management skills with officials from the Army's Training and Doctrine Command and the Marine Corps' Training and Education Command. Furthermore, we participated in an online demonstration of the Army's Digital Training Management System and reviewed the online trainings available through the Army Training Network. Table 2 outlines all

of the organizations we contacted and interviewed during the course of our review.

**Table 2: Organizations Interviewed During Our Review**

Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs, Arlington, Va.
Office of the Deputy Undersecretary of Defense for Readiness and Training Policy and Programs, Arlington, Va.
Joint Staff, Chief of Joint Exercises and Training Division (J-7), Arlington, Va.
U.S. Pacific Command, Training and Exercise Directorate (J-7), Camp Smith, Hawaii
U.S. Army
Department of Army, Training Directorate (G-3/5/7), Arlington, Va.
Combined Arms Center, Fort Leavenworth, Kans.
U.S. Army Forces Command, Fort McPherson, Ga.
U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command, Fort Monroe, Va.
U.S. Army Audit Agency, Arlington, Va.
U.S. Army Installation Management Command, Arlington, Va.
U.S. Army Pacific Command, Fort Shafter, Hawaii
U.S. Army Research Institute, Fort Hood, Tex.
Joint Readiness Training Center, Fort Polk, La.
National Training Center, Fort Irwin, Calif.
Fort Bragg, N.C.
U.S. Army Special Operations Command, Fort Bragg, N.C.
XVIII Airborne Corps
82nd Airborne Division
1st Brigade, 82nd Airborne Division
2nd Brigade, 82nd Airborne Division
3rd Brigade, 82nd Airborne Division
4th Brigade, 82nd Airborne Division
82nd Combat Aviation Brigade
95th Civil Affairs Brigade
18th Fires Brigade
Directorate of Plans, Training, and Mobilization
Fort Hood, Tex.
III Corps
1st Cavalry Division
1st Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division
2nd Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division
1st Air Cavalry Brigade

41st Fires Brigade
48th Chemical Brigade
Directorate of Plans, Training, Mobilization, and Security
Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Wash.
I Corps
2nd Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division
3rd Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division
4th Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division
17th Fires Brigade
201 Battlefield Surveillance Brigade
Directorate of Plans, Training, Mobilization, and Security
Schofield Barracks, Hawaii
25th Infantry Division
8th Theater Sustainment Command
3rd Brigade, 25th Infantry Division
Pohakula Training Area
25th Combat Aviation Brigade
Directorate of Plans, Training, Mobilization, and Security
U.S. Marine Corps
Marine Corps Plans, Policy and Operations, Arlington, Va.
Marine Corps Forces Command, Norfolk, Va.
Marine Forces Command Pacific, Fort Shafter, Hawaii.
Marine Corps Training and Education Command, Quantico, Va.
Marine Corps Air Ground Task Force Training Command and Tactical Training Exercise Control Group, Twentynine Palms, Calif.
Marine Corps Manpower and Reserve Affairs, Officer Assignments, Quantico, Va.
Marine Corps Manpower and Reserve Affairs, Enlisted Assignments, Quantico, Va.
Camp Pendleton, Calif.
I Marine Expeditionary Force
1st Marine Division
Marine Aircraft Group 39
1st Combat Logistics Regiment
1st Battalion, 5th Marines
3rd Battalion, 4th Marines
Combat Logistics Battalion 7
Marine Light Attack Helicopter Squadron 367
Marine Medium Helicopter Squadron 268
Camp Lejeune, N.C.

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II Marine Expeditionary Force
3rd Battalion, 2nd Marines
2nd Battalion, 8th Marines
Okinawa, Japan
III Marine Expeditionary Force
Marine Corps Base Hawaii
3rd Marine Regiment
Marine Aircraft Group 24
3rd Battalion, 3rd Marines
Combat Logistics Battalion 3
3rd Radio Battalion
Installations, Logistics and Environment

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Source: GAO.

We conducted this performance audit from July 2010 to July 2011, in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

# Appendix II: Comments from the Department of Defense



PERSONNEL AND  
READINESS

OFFICE OF THE UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE  
4000 DEFENSE PENTAGON  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301-4000

JUL 15 2011

Ms. Sharon Pickup  
Director, Defense Capabilities and Management Team  
U.S. Government Accountability Office  
441 G Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Ms. Pickup,

This is the Department of Defense (DoD) response to Government Accountability Office Draft Report (GAO-11-673), "ARMY AND MARINE CORPS TRAINING: Metrics Are Needed to Assess Training Management Initiatives," dated June 16, 2011 (GAO Code 351515). Thank you for the opportunity to comment. We concur with the draft report's recommendation. Elaboration on this position is in the enclosure appended to this letter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Laura J. Junor", is positioned above the typed name.

Laura J. Junor  
Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense  
Readiness

**ENCLOSURE**

**GAO Draft Report Dated JUNE 16, 2011  
GAO-11-673 (GAO CODE 351515)**

**“ARMY AND MARINE CORPS TRAINING: METRICS ARE NEEDED TO  
ASSESS TRAINING MANAGEMENT INITIATIVES”**

**DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE COMMENTS  
TO THE GAO RECOMMENDATIONS**

**RECOMMENDATION:** The GAO recommends that the Secretary of Defense direct the Secretary of the Army and the Commandant of the Marine Corps to develop results-oriented performance metrics that can be used to evaluate the effectiveness of these training management initiatives and support any adjustments that may be needed. (See page 18/GAO Draft Report.)

**DoD RESPONSE:** DoD concurs with the GAO recommendation. The Army agrees that developing performance metrics to gauge the effectiveness of various tools implemented to restore training management skills can be valuable. These metrics can help provide an objective view to support the subjective assessment of Training Readiness.

The United States Marine Corps, as identified in the report, continues efforts to enhance and enable training management practices throughout the Corps. As the Marine Corps redeploys and resets the force, it will ensure doctrinal unit training management practices are emphasized as the means to most effectively plan and meet training readiness requirements. Additionally, the Marine Corps will continue to develop and refine performance metrics and tools that support the commander's ability to assess individual and unit training readiness.

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# Appendix III: GAO Contact and Staff Acknowledgments

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## GAO Contact

Sharon Pickup, (202) 512-9619 or [pickups@gao.gov](mailto:pickups@gao.gov)

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## Staff Acknowledgments

In addition to the contact named above, key contributors to this report were Michael Ferren (Assistant Director), Jerome Brown, Kenya Jones, Ashley Lipton, Lonnie McAllister, Terry Richardson, and Erik Wilkins-McKee.

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